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# Secret trial hides CIA blushes

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A ZAMBIAN Foreign Office official accused of treason is being tried in camera in Lusaka, apparently to save the American CIA from embarrassment.

The request that the trial should not be held in public came from the US embassy in Lusaka. The official, Webster K. Lumbwe, is said to have told President Kaunda that he was recruited by the CIA.

Kaunda has been troubled for more than a year by efforts to overthrow him which he believes to have been masterminded by the CIA, the South African intelligence services, and, possibly, also by a West German agency.

It seems unlikely that the three agencies were working in collusion. But the opposition groups they support share the aim of overthrowing Kaunda.

Earlier this year he ordered the expulsion of an American diplomat whom he accused of being a CIA agent trying to subvert the regime. There were three coup attempts last year, and a coup was planned for last July when Kaunda was due to attend the annual Organisation of African Unity summit in Nairobi.

The President got wind of the plot and stayed in his capital.

Why should the CIA be involved in Kaunda's overthrow? The only obvious reason is Kaunda's decision to buy arms and equipment from the Soviet bloc.

He took that decision more than two years ago when President Carter was still in office. Carter, who had a good relationship with Kaunda, expressed his concern at the time.

No action appears to have been taken to support those working for Kaunda's overthrow until President Reagan took office.

Kaunda had acted—after ten fruitless years asking Western governments for the weapons he believed necessary—to defend Zambia from Rhodesian and South African attacks.

He had pressed successive British governments to provide Zambia with sophisticated weapons, but without success. He appealed for American aid, but President Nixon refused to receive him. The Carter administration was also unresponsive, as were Sweden and West Germany.

In September 1978 Kaunda met the then British Prime Minister, James Callaghan, at Kano. Britain agreed to send technicians to restore Zambia's Rapier air defence system.

Although a military team went to Zambia, the system was not repaired. The Rhodesians seem to have learnt of its ineffectiveness and began a series of aerial attacks on guerrilla bases in Zambia.

Kaunda turned to the Russians in 1979 and their response was immediate and positive. Arrangements were made to deliver aircraft and missiles.

The opposition to Kaunda has come from three main sources. The most persistent challengers have been a small but influential group of intellectuals and businessmen, with support from elements among the Bemba tribe. After the Bemba leader Simon Kapwepwe died in 1980 the two most prominent members of the group are Ernest Sakala (often mentioned as the man marked out to replace Kaunda) and Valentine Musakanya. With 11 others, they are on trial for treason.

The second source of disaffection is in the army, where a small dissident group of officers was reported to have been involved in a shoot-out in the army barracks in October 1980. This incident has never been confirmed.

The third group comprises trade union leaders on the Copperbelt who embarked on a damaging strike some months ago. A number were detained, but all except four of the trade union leaders have since been released.

Zambia's economy continues to give cause for serious concern. It suffered grievously because of the country's support for sanctions against Rhodesia and there were hopes of a dramatic change once Zimbabwe became independent in April 1980. Although there are some signs of improvement in the communications to the sea, the continuing low price of copper, the downturn of the international economy and the higher cost of oil and industrial imports, have militated against the expected recovery.

This has had a depressing effect on morale. Combined with the state of insecurity produced by the strikes and the aborted coup attempts, the situation has proved a serious test for President Kaunda's leadership. However, there is no evidence that his position is seriously threatened.